commencement of its operations. The set up at Panaji is envisaged to telecast locally produced programmes for a duration of about 30 minutes daily.

Contract signed with Sweden's Ericsson

*413. SHRI PASUMPON THA KIRUTTINAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a contract with Sweden's Ericasson has recently been signed by the Department of Telecommunications (DOT); and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise in view of reply to (a) above.

Freedom Fighters' Role in Nation Building

*414. SHRI SURESH PACHORI:

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Freedom Fighters Association, New Delhi had urged Government on May 7, 1990 to fully utilise the work force of the freedom fighters for nation-building; and

(b) if so, whether any programme has been prepared or is being worked out to utilise their services in dealing with menace like terrorism, secessionism and fundamentalism; if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MUFTI MOHAMMED SAYEED): (a) No communication on the subject has been received in the Ministry of Home Affairs from the Freedom Fighters Association, New Delhi.

(b) Does not arise.

Arrest of Tamil Refugees in Tamil Nadu

*415. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the Tamil refugees who came from Sri Lanka and are housed in Orissa have recently started moving out of Orissa and that they have been arrested in Tamil Nadu by the Tamil Nadu Police;

(b) whether Government had held negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government for creating an atmosphere for the return of the refugees to Sri Lankas; and

(c) whether Government are committed to the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement and if so, whether the clauses in The Agreement have been fully implemented?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The need to create these conditions has been taken up with the Sri Lankan Government on several occasions.

(c) Yes, Sir. Government upholds and honours all international Agreements signed by India. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement has been implemented in large measure; Tamil is now recognised as an official language of Sri Lanka; the Constitution of Sri

Lanka has been amended to provide for the creation of Provincial Councils, the Sri Lankan Government has completed legislative processes for devolution of powers to these Provincial Councils. With this, the basic framework been created for the settlement of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. It is now up to the Sri Lanka Government and Tamil groups to give meaning to this framework and create conditions for effective devolution.

Delay in issuing of passports

*416. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the huge backlog of passport applications pending at various passport offices all over the country;

(b) if so, what is the present backlog in Andhra Pradesh ; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to expedite the issue of passports in the country?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 16,796

(c) Several steps have been decided to expedite issuance of passports. These are enumerated in the statement laid on the table of the House.

Statement

The following steps have been decided to expedite issue of passports.

Issue fresh passports on the basis of attestations of personal particulars by Senior Gazetted Officers of Central or State Government as also to issue passports where police or CID reports are not received within four weeks. Present backlog where police reports are not received over a month is 1.38 lakhs. This pendency would be liquidated.

There is a backlog of nearly 25,000 due to shortage of passport booklets. Urgent measures are being taken to enhance the printing capacity for the passport booklets at the India Security Press, Nasik.

There is also a backlog due to passport offices having received incomplete applications. Instructions have now been issued that incomplete applications should be returned to applicants on the spot pointing out the deficiencies.

Urgent steps are also being taken to finalize the revised recruitment rules, to bring out promotion panels and to fill up vacant posts. Financial sanction of concerned authorities is being obtained on an urgent basis for the additional posts required to cope up with the increase in workload of the passport offices. Meanwhile, casual workers have been recruited temporarily special incentive is being given to staff to work overtime.

Public advisory Committees for all Passport Offices are being set up.

Issue of passports is being speeded up by early computerization of passport offices.

Periodic computerized monitoring of disposal of passport applications and public complaints is being carried out by the Ministry.

Demurrage charges payable by Nafed to Bombay port trust

*417. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

SHRI RAMSINH RATHWA:

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bombay Port Trust has to recover